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Myth and Feminist Discourse in the Selected Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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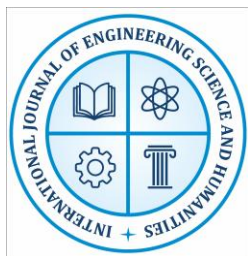
ABSTRACT

This paper examines the feminist reinterpretation of Indian mythology in the fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, focusing on her retellings of the two great epics of the subcontinent, *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019). Drawing on feminist literary theory and the study of myth as a cultural construct, the paper argues that Divakaruni transforms the epic heroines Draupadi and Sita from objects of narration into narrating subjects of their own stories, thereby reclaiming female voice and agency and challenging the patriarchal assumptions embedded within traditional tellings. Through the adoption of the first-person female perspective, Divakaruni recovers the interiority of her heroines, rendering them complex and psychologically resonant individuals rather than flat archetypes of feminine virtue. The paper demonstrates that her project constitutes not a rejection of tradition but a critical engagement with it, one that discovers within the mythic heritage itself the resources for the empowerment of women. It further shows that Divakaruni's feminism is at once committed and nuanced, portraying her heroines as agents who exercise meaningful choice within genuinely constraining circumstances and whose acts of resistance carry real costs. The paper concludes that Divakaruni has made a significant and distinctive contribution to contemporary feminist and mythological fiction, reshaping the collective memory of Indian civilisation to accord women their proper place within its foundational narratives.

Keywords: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, feminist retelling, Indian mythology, Draupadi, Sita, female agency, cultural memory, narrative voice

1. INTRODUCTION

Mythology has always occupied a central position in the cultural and imaginative life of India. From the earliest oral traditions to the great written epics, myths have served not merely as stories of gods, heroes, and cosmic events, but as repositories of a civilisation's deepest values, anxieties, and aspirations. They function as living frameworks through which successive generations have understood their relationship to the divine, to society, and to one another (Doniger, 2019). Yet, for much of literary history, these narratives were shaped and transmitted



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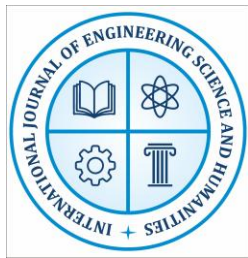
through a predominantly patriarchal lens, with the result that the women who populate them—however powerful, however central to the unfolding of events—were frequently rendered as silent figures, passive vessels, or symbolic embodiments of virtue and sacrifice. Their inner lives, their desires, their doubts, and their struggles were rarely accorded narrative attention in their own right (Rajan, 2018).

It is precisely against this backdrop that the contemporary phenomenon of feminist mythological retelling acquires its significance. Writers across the globe have turned to ancient narratives not to discard them but to interrogate them, to open them up, and to recover the voices that had been muted within them (Sengupta & Roy, 2020). In the Indian context, few authors have pursued this project with as much sensitivity, imaginative richness, and popular resonance as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Through novels such as *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments*, she has undertaken the ambitious task of retelling two of the most revered epics of the subcontinent—the Mahabharata and the Ramayana—from the perspective of their principal female protagonists, Draupadi and Sita respectively. In doing so, she has transformed these women from objects of narration into subjects of their own stories (Banerjee, 2021).

This paper undertakes a detailed exploration of the ways in which Divakaruni reimagines myth through a feminist consciousness. It examines how she reclaims female voice and agency, how she challenges the patriarchal assumptions embedded within traditional tellings, and how she renders her heroines as complex, emotionally layered, and psychologically resonant human beings rather than as flat archetypes of feminine ideals (Bose, 2017). The discussion situates her work within the broader traditions of Indian mythological literature and feminist literary theory, and it considers the contemporary relevance of her retellings for ongoing conversations about gender, identity, and empowerment (Mehta, 2022). The central argument advanced here is that Divakaruni's retellings constitute a sophisticated intervention in the collective memory of Indian civilisation, one that reshapes the way its foundational narratives are remembered so as to include the perspectives and experiences of the women at their centre.

2. MYTH AS A LITERARY AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

Before turning to the specific analysis of Divakaruni's novels, it is necessary to establish a conceptual foundation regarding the nature of myth itself. For the purposes of this study, myth is understood not as falsehood or mere fantasy but as a profound and complex cultural form that performs vital functions within human societies. A myth may be defined as a traditional narrative, usually of anonymous authorship and sacred or semi-sacred character, that seeks to explain the origins of the world, the nature of the divine, the foundations of social order, or the fundamental conditions of human existence (Doniger, 2019). Yet the defining feature of myth is not its content but its function: a myth is a story that a community holds to be significant, that it returns to repeatedly, and that it treats as a source of meaning and orientation.



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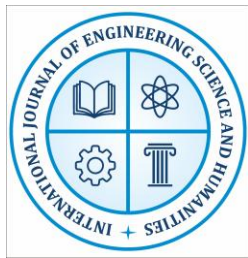
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In the Indian literary tradition, myth is not confined to the domain of the fantastical or the archaic; it is woven into the very fabric of everyday cultural existence. The Vedas, the Puranas, and the two great epics constitute a vast reservoir of mythic material that has continuously informed religious practice, moral instruction, artistic expression, and social organisation (Pattanaik, 2017). What distinguishes the Indian conception of myth is its fluidity and its multiplicity. There exists no single authoritative version of any given epic; rather, countless regional, linguistic, and sectarian variations coexist, each inflecting the narrative according to the concerns of its particular community. This inherent plasticity of the Indian mythic tradition establishes a precedent of retelling and reinterpretation that long precedes the modern feminist project (Richman, 2020). Divakaruni's work may thus be understood not as a departure from tradition but as a continuation of it, one that brings to bear a distinctly contemporary and gender-conscious sensibility.

One of the most profound functions of myth is its role as a vehicle of collective memory. A society's myths encode its sense of its own past, preserving an imaginative and evaluative memory of origins, formative events, and exemplary lives (Assmann, 2019). Because myth serves as collective memory, control over the telling of myth is a matter of considerable cultural significance. When the dominant versions of myth are shaped by patriarchal assumptions, the collective memory they transmit is one in which women's experiences are marginalised and men's perspectives are privileged. Feminist retelling can therefore be understood as an intervention in collective memory, an effort to reshape the way a culture remembers its foundational stories so as to include the perspectives and experiences that had previously been excluded (Sengupta & Roy, 2020).

Equally consequential is the role of myth as a medium for the transmission of social and cultural values, including, crucially, values concerning gender. The mythic representations of women—as devoted wives, as self-sacrificing mothers, as embodiments of chastity and endurance—have exerted a profound influence on the norms and expectations governing women's lives in Indian society (Rajan, 2018). The figure of Sita, in particular, has long been held up as the paradigm of ideal womanhood. It is this function of myth as a transmitter of gendered values that feminist retelling most directly contests, seeking to challenge the values these representations have traditionally conveyed and to propose alternative understandings of womanhood (Nair, 2021).

Myth further performs a range of interconnected functions within both literature and society. At the most fundamental level, it provides explanation, offering accounts of how the world came to be and what the proper order of existence should be. It performs a social function of considerable importance, binding a community together by furnishing it with a common frame of reference and a collective sense of identity. And in the specifically literary domain, myth functions as an inexhaustible source of narrative material, character, and theme, offering the writer a set of



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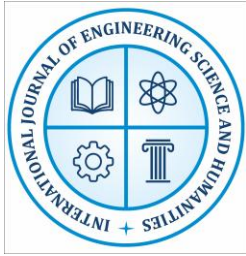
resonant, culturally charged materials that can be reworked to address contemporary preoccupations (Pattanaik, 2017). This is precisely what Divakaruni does: she takes the culturally charged materials of the epics and reworks them to address the contemporary concern with gender and women's experience, demonstrating the continuing generative power of myth as a literary resource. Myths are also characterised by their emotional and existential resonance, addressing the great, unavoidable questions of human life—birth, death, love, loss, duty, and justice—in a manner that engages not only the intellect but the deepest layers of feeling (Ramaswamy, 2021).

3. REIMAGINING DRAUPADI IN THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS

The Palace of Illusions (2008) represents Divakaruni's ambitious retelling of the Mahabharata through the eyes of Draupadi, or Panchaali, the fire-born princess who becomes the shared wife of the five Pandava brothers and whose humiliation in the Kaurava court serves as a principal catalyst for the great war. In the traditional epic, Draupadi is a figure of immense importance, yet her interior life remains largely opaque, glimpsed only in moments of crisis (Chakravarti, 2018). Divakaruni's novel transforms her from an object of the epic's action into the narrating subject of her own story, opening up a rich exploration of female consciousness, desire, and agency.

In the traditional Mahabharata, Draupadi's characterisation is refracted primarily through the concerns of the epic's male protagonists and the demands of its overarching narrative. Born from fire in answer to her father Drupada's desire for an instrument of vengeance, she is from the outset associated with a destiny larger than herself. Throughout the traditional epic she is characterised by her fierce dignity, her sharp intelligence, and her unwillingness to accept injustice quietly—qualities that distinguish her from more conventionally submissive female figures and that provide the raw material upon which Divakaruni builds (Verma, 2022). Yet in the traditional telling these qualities are ultimately subordinated to the larger narrative of the Pandavas' struggle for their kingdom, so that Draupadi remains, in the end, a supporting figure in a story that belongs primarily to men.

The single most important decision Divakaruni makes is to narrate the entire epic in Draupadi's first-person voice. Where the traditional Mahabharata is told from an omniscient perspective that surveys the vast field of action from above, Divakaruni's novel confines the reader to Draupadi's consciousness, allowing the events of the epic to be seen only as she sees them, coloured by her feelings, her interpretations, and her limitations of knowledge (Banerjee, 2021). This restriction of perspective is not a limitation but a source of the novel's power, for it renders Draupadi immediate and intimate in a way that the traditional epic never attempts. By granting Draupadi the authority to tell her own story, Divakaruni symbolically restores to her a form of agency that the traditional epic denied; in a narrative tradition in which women's voices were routinely



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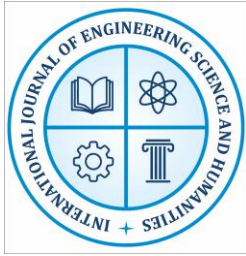
subordinated to men's, the act of allowing a woman to narrate is itself a feminist gesture (Mehta, 2022).

A central preoccupation of the novel is Draupadi's search for a stable and authentic sense of identity. From the moment of her fiery birth, Draupadi is defined by others and for others: she is born to serve her father's purpose of vengeance, she is prophesied to change the course of history, and she is married according to arrangements in which her own preferences count for little. Throughout the novel, she struggles against the sense that her life is not truly her own (Sharma & Kaur, 2020). The novel does not present her as a straightforwardly triumphant figure who transcends all limitation, but rather as a woman engaged in a lifelong and never fully completed struggle to claim a selfhood of her own amid the pressures of a world designed to define her from without. The magnificent palace that gives the novel its title functions as a potent symbol of this aspiration to selfhood, and its eventual loss marks the shattering of that aspiration and the beginning of her deepest suffering.

The Palace of Illusions offers a searching examination of the intersecting structures of gender, marriage, and patriarchy that shape and constrain Draupadi's life. Draupadi is repeatedly treated as an object to be won, possessed, wagered, and transferred, her own will and desires counting for little in the decisions that determine her fate. The infamous game of dice, in which Yudhishtira stakes and loses her as though she were a piece of property, dramatises with brutal clarity the reduction of women to objects of male ownership (Chakravarti, 2018). Divakaruni allows Draupadi to articulate the outrage and the philosophical objection that this treatment provokes, giving voice to a critique of patriarchy that the traditional epic leaves largely implicit. Yet her treatment is nuanced rather than polemical: she portrays the men in Draupadi's life not as simple villains but as figures themselves caught within the constraints of a patriarchal order that shapes their conduct and limits their choices (Iyer, 2019).

One of the most striking features of Divakaruni's reimagining is her willingness to explore the character's desires and emotional complexities. The novel gives extended attention to Draupadi's secret and forbidden attraction to Karna, the noble but ill-fated warrior who fights on the side of her enemies. This attraction, unconsummated and largely unspoken, runs as an undercurrent throughout the narrative, complicating Draupadi's relationships with her husbands and lending her character a depth of longing and regret (Nair, 2021). By foregrounding Draupadi's desire, Divakaruni asserts her heroine's full humanity, refusing to confine her within the desexualised ideal of the virtuous wife and insisting upon her existence as a desiring subject.

In Divakaruni's reimagining, Draupadi emerges as a powerful symbol of feminist resistance. Her most iconic act of resistance is her response to her attempted disrobing in the Kaurava court, where she confronts the assembly with searching questions about the legitimacy of her treatment, exposing the moral bankruptcy of those who would humiliate her and shaming the elders who



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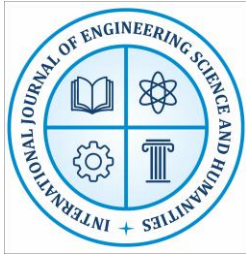
fail to defend her (Sengupta & Roy, 2020). Her defiance transforms her from victim into accuser. At the same time, Divakaruni is careful not to present this resistance as simple or unambiguously triumphant, for Draupadi's defiance sets in motion a chain of events that leads to devastating loss. Her resistance is heroic, but it is also costly, and the novel presents feminist resistance not as a straightforward path to liberation but as a fraught and consequential undertaking (Mehta, 2022).

4. REINTERPRETING SITA IN THE FOREST OF ENCHANTMENTS

The Forest of Enchantments (2019) is Divakaruni's retelling of the Ramayana from the perspective of Sita, the devoted wife of Rama whose abduction by Ravana precipitates the epic's central conflict and whose trials by fire and exile constitute some of the most fraught episodes in Indian mythology. If Draupadi is a figure of fierce defiance, Sita has traditionally been an emblem of patient endurance and wifely devotion, held up across generations as the very model of ideal womanhood (Richman, 2020). Divakaruni's achievement in this novel is to reinterpret this seemingly submissive figure, uncovering within the image of the patient wife a woman of profound strength, moral clarity, and ultimate self-assertion.

The traditional image of Sita has long been a source of ambivalence, even within the tradition itself. Her trials raise troubling questions about justice and about the treatment of women, and various regional and folk traditions have registered discomfort with her repeated humiliation (Rajan, 2018). The figure of Sita thus arrives in Divakaruni's hands already charged with tension, already the site of unresolved questions about the relationship between female virtue and female suffering. As with *The Palace of Illusions*, the central strategy of the novel is the adoption of the heroine's first-person perspective. Divakaruni imagines Sita as the author of her own account, writing the story of her life, which she conceives as the *Sitayana*—the tale as told from her own vantage. This conceit is a potent feminist gesture, for it asserts Sita's right to author her own narrative rather than remaining a character within a story authored by and about men (Krishnan, 2022).

The novel explores with great tenderness the themes of love, motherhood, and sacrifice that are central to Sita's story. Sita's love for Rama is presented as deep and genuine, and Divakaruni does not diminish it in her effort to reinterpret the character. Motherhood emerges as a particularly significant theme in the latter portion of the novel: banished to the forest while pregnant, Sita raises her twin sons alone, and Divakaruni renders her experience of solitary motherhood with great sensitivity, celebrating a distinctively female form of endurance and creativity (Nair, 2021). The theme of sacrifice runs throughout, yet Divakaruni reinterprets its meaning, presenting Sita's sacrifices less as evidence of submission than as manifestations of her strength, dignity, and moral seriousness. Sita sacrifices much, but in Divakaruni's telling she



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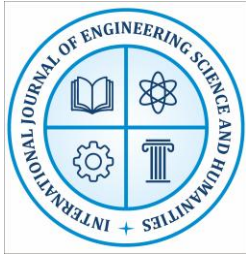
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does so as an agent making choices, not as a passive victim accepting a fate imposed from without.

Perhaps the most important dimension of the reinterpretation is Divakaruni's revelation of the strength and emotional resilience that underlie Sita's apparent submission. The traditional image of Sita as the patient, enduring wife has often been read as an image of weakness or passivity, but Divakaruni insists that patience and endurance are themselves forms of strength, and that Sita's capacity to withstand extraordinary suffering without being broken by it constitutes a profound resilience (Krishnan, 2022). During her captivity in Lanka, Sita resists Ravana's advances with unwavering firmness, drawing upon deep reserves of inner strength. This resilience is grounded in her connection to the natural world, in her origin from the earth, and in her capacity to love, which Divakaruni presents as a source of strength rather than vulnerability (Sharma & Kaur, 2020).

The Forest of Enchantments offers a pointed critique of the patriarchal structures and social expectations that shape and constrain Sita's life. The most searching aspect of this critique concerns the double standard to which Sita is subjected, the demand that she prove her purity while no comparable demand is made of Rama. The trial by fire dramatises the patriarchal obsession with female purity and the injustice of holding women to standards of conduct that are not applied to men (Iyer, 2019). The subsequent banishment of Sita, occasioned by the doubts of the populace regarding her purity, extends this critique, exposing the way patriarchal societies sacrifice women to the maintenance of male honour and social order. Importantly, Divakaruni's critique does not reduce Rama to a simple villain, presenting him instead as a man himself caught within the constraints of his role as king, torn between his love for Sita and his sense of duty to his people (Mehta, 2022).

The culmination of the reinterpretation is the transformation of Sita from an emblem of submissive virtue into a modern feminist icon. This transformation reaches its climax in the novel's handling of Sita's final act. In the traditional telling, when Rama once more requires Sita to prove her purity, she calls upon the earth from which she was born to receive her, and the ground opens to take her back; this ending has traditionally been read as a final act of wifely submission. Divakaruni, however, reinterprets it as an act of ultimate self-assertion and refusal (Krishnan, 2022). Having endured trial and banishment, having proven her innocence time and again, Sita will not be humiliated a second time to satisfy the doubts of others. Her choice to return to the earth is thus reframed as an assertion of her own dignity, demonstrating that the refusal to submit to injustice may sometimes be expressed through withdrawal as much as through confrontation.



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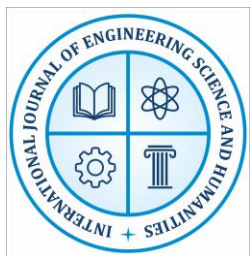
5. FEMINIST REVISION OF INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

Divakaruni's specific retellings may be situated within the broader context of the feminist revision of Indian mythology, a project grounded in feminist literary theory and myth criticism. At its core, feminist criticism is concerned with the ways in which literature both reflects and shapes the gendered structures of society, and with the recovery and re-evaluation of women's experience and expression (Showalter, 2019). Applied to myth, feminist criticism attends to the ways in which traditional mythological narratives encode patriarchal assumptions, marginalise female perspectives, and legitimise the subordination of women. A central concept is that of the male gaze and the associated marginalisation of female subjectivity: traditional myths tend to view women from the outside, as objects of male perception and desire, rather than from within, as subjects with their own consciousness and agency (Rajan, 2018). Divakaruni's adoption of the first-person female perspective is a direct enactment of the critical imperative to recover female subjectivity.

Feminist myth criticism draws upon the insight that myths are not fixed and eternal but are historically produced and therefore susceptible to revision. Because myths are cultural constructs, shaped by the societies that tell them, they can be reshaped by societies with different values (Assmann, 2019). This recognition opens the way for the feminist project of rewriting myth, for if the patriarchal character of traditional myth is a product of history rather than an unalterable given, then it can be contested and transformed. Divakaruni's retellings embody this understanding, treating the epics not as sacrosanct and unchangeable but as living traditions open to reinterpretation in light of contemporary values (Sengupta & Roy, 2020).

Central to the feminist revision of myth is the project of reclaiming women's voices, of restoring to female characters the capacity for self-expression that traditional tellings have so often denied them. Divakaruni's decision to narrate both novels in the first-person voices of their heroines constitutes a direct and powerful act of reclamation; through these narrating voices, Draupadi and Sita cease to be objects of narration and become subjects who speak for themselves (Banerjee, 2021). By giving voice to these figures, Divakaruni implicitly gives voice to the countless women whose experiences have been marginalised or silenced within patriarchal traditions, so that her heroines become representative figures whose recovered voices stand for the recovered voices of women more generally (Nair, 2021).

The feminist revision of myth is animated, at its heart, by a commitment to gender equality and female empowerment. By challenging patriarchal representations and presenting alternative images of female strength, agency, and dignity, feminist retelling contributes to the broader struggle for the recognition of women's full humanity and equal worth (Mehta, 2022). Divakaruni's novels serve this cause by presenting heroines who, despite operating within severely constraining circumstances, exercise agency and refuse to be reduced to objects or



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victims. At the same time, her treatment of empowerment is realistic rather than idealised: her heroines do not achieve simple or complete liberation, and their acts of agency carry real costs and consequences. This realism lends her vision a particular credibility, acknowledging the difficulty of the struggle for equality and the persistence of the structures that oppose it (Sharma & Kaur, 2020).

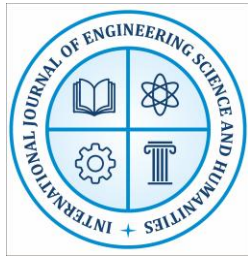
6. CULTURAL MEMORY, DIASPORA, AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Divakaruni occupies a distinctive position within the landscape of contemporary Indian writing in English. Born in Kolkata and later settled in the United States, she writes from a vantage point that is at once deeply rooted in Indian cultural tradition and informed by the perspectives of diaspora and cross-cultural encounter (Banerjee, 2021). This dual positioning lends her mythological fiction a particular resonance, for she addresses simultaneously readers steeped in the epics and readers encountering them, perhaps for the first time, through her retellings. Her prose is lyrical yet accessible, and she possesses a remarkable capacity to render ancient figures immediate and emotionally comprehensible to modern sensibilities (Mishra, 2018).

The reinterpretation of the mythic representations of women carries real significance for the construction of female identity in contemporary society. In a cultural context in which mythic figures continue to serve as powerful reference points for the understanding of womanhood, the reinterpretation of Sita and Draupadi carries considerable cultural weight, contesting the versions of female identity that the traditional ideals embody and proposing alternatives in their place (Nair, 2021). Divakaruni's retellings speak directly to contemporary gender issues—the objectification of women, the double standards to which they are held, the sacrifice of women to the demands of male honour, the denial of female agency and voice—that are not merely features of the mythic past but persistent realities of contemporary gender relations (Mehta, 2022).

Divakaruni's work also occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of cultural identity and women's empowerment. Her retellings demonstrate that these two concerns need not be opposed, that it is possible to honour and draw upon cultural tradition while also contesting its patriarchal elements and advancing an empowering vision of womanhood (Krishnan, 2022). This reconciliation is of particular significance in a context in which appeals to cultural tradition are sometimes used to resist the advancement of women's rights. Divakaruni's work demonstrates the falseness of this opposition, showing that the cultural heritage of the epics contains within it resources for the empowerment of women, and that the feminist reinterpretation of tradition is itself a form of cultural engagement rather than a rejection of culture (Sengupta & Roy, 2020). This reconciliation holds special resonance for readers of the Indian diaspora, for whom the negotiation of cultural identity is often a central concern.

One of the distinctive features of Divakaruni's contribution is its accessibility and its popular reach. Her novels have achieved considerable commercial success and have reached a wide



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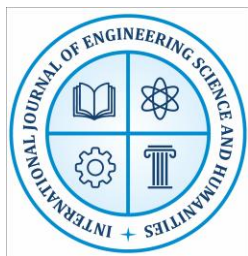
readership, extending the feminist reinterpretation of myth beyond the academy and into the broader culture (Mishra, 2018). In making feminist ideas accessible and engaging through the medium of compelling storytelling, Divakaruni has contributed to the dissemination of feminist perspectives to a wide audience, demonstrating that feminist literature need not be difficult or forbidding but may reach and move a large readership while retaining its intellectual and political seriousness (Iyer, 2019).

Divakaruni's retellings are further enriched by a network of symbols and archetypes that carry significant thematic weight and that connect her heroines to enduring patterns of the imagination. Draupadi, born from fire, is associated throughout with the qualities of fire—passion, destructiveness, purification, and transformation—while Sita, born from the earth, is associated with the qualities of earth—fertility, endurance, and the capacity to sustain life (Ghosh, 2023). These elemental associations, drawn from and reinterpreting the symbolic resources of the epic tradition itself, deepen the characterisation of the two heroines and illuminate their contrasting yet complementary forms of female strength. Read together, the two novels present two of the tradition's most significant female figures and explore, through them, a wide range of concerns about gender, identity, and power, constituting a substantial and coherent body of feminist mythological fiction (Das, 2023).

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's retellings of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana constitute a significant and sophisticated contribution to feminist and mythological fiction. Through the adoption of the first-person female perspective, Divakaruni transforms the epic heroines Draupadi and Sita from objects of narration into narrating subjects of their own stories, reclaiming female voice and agency and challenging the patriarchal assumptions embedded within traditional tellings. In *The Palace of Illusions*, she recovers the fierce dignity, the complex desires, and the principled resistance of Draupadi; in *The Forest of Enchantments*, she uncovers within the seemingly submissive figure of Sita a woman of profound strength, moral clarity, and ultimate self-assertion.

The analysis has demonstrated that Divakaruni's project constitutes not a rejection of tradition but a critical engagement with it, one that discovers within the mythic heritage itself the resources for the empowerment of women. Her feminism is at once committed and nuanced, portraying her heroines as agents who exercise meaningful choice within genuinely constraining circumstances and whose acts of resistance carry real costs. This realism lends her vision a particular credibility and depth, distinguishing her contribution to feminist literature. Equally distinctive is her reconciliation of the honouring of cultural tradition with the critique of injustice, her demonstration that engagement with heritage and the pursuit of justice need not be opposed.



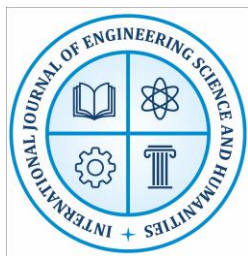
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By retelling the foundational narratives of Indian civilisation from the perspectives of their heroines, Divakaruni performs an important work of reshaping collective memory, insisting that the women at their centre be remembered not as passive symbols but as feeling, thinking, striving individuals. Her retellings speak to contemporary readers not merely as literary artefacts but as interventions in the ongoing cultural conversation about gender, identity, and empowerment. In recovering the voices and affirming the agency of Draupadi and Sita, Divakaruni offers empowering models of womanhood, challenges the patriarchal ideals that the traditional myths have transmitted, and enriches the collective memory of Indian civilisation to accord women their proper place within its foundational stories. Her achievement thus extends beyond the literary into the domain of cultural and ethical significance, and it establishes her as a writer of considerable importance within contemporary Indian fiction in English. Future research might profitably extend this inquiry through comparative analysis with other writers of feminist mythological retelling and through investigation of the reception of her work among diverse readerships.

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